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MONDAY, October 9, 1933
U.S. Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Storing the Garden Crop." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry, U.S.D.A.

--ooOoo--

More news about the garden crop today. More news about keeping your apples and your garden vegetables over the winter. No, we're not going to say a word about canning. We're going to talk about an entirely different method of preserving foods--storage. As you probably know, storing is the easiest, cheapest and possibly the oldest way of saving the garden's harvest for cold-weather use. I don't know where the idea originated nor when. Maybe an early housekeeper back in the dark ages got an inspiration from the squirrels, who go into this matter of storage so seriously at this season. Anyway, people have stored vegetables from early times. Back in grandmother's and great-grandmother's time, most houses had their own storage cellars or outside storage buildings. And most thrifty households stocked up in the fall with barrels of apples and with potatoes, onions, squashes, carrots, cabbages and so on.

But when the scientists began studying this storage problem, we began to know the whys and wherefores of putting away the different vegetables for safe-keeping during the cold weather. Now we don't have to store by guess and then wonder whether all those fine potatoes will rot before we have time to eat them, or whether the carrots and turnips will all shrivel during the first few weeks in storage. If we store products properly, we can count on them to last until spring.

The four big secrets of successful storage are these: first, store only the kind of vegetables that will keep this way--juicy vegetables and greens like spinach won't do for storage; second, see that every item you put in storage is in good condition, ripe but not too ripe, no cuts, bruises or rotten spots; third, have the temperature and moisture to suit each kind of vegetable; and, fourth, allow for ventilation during storage.

And that reminds me of a little rhyme on the subject:

"For storage crops, each has its rule,
And there are lots of reasons why
Beets and spuds keep moist and cool
But pumpkins must be warm and dry."

That tells a story worth remembering about storage. Some crops need a cold, dry storage place; some need a warm, dry place; others need a cool, moist place. All need ventilation. Maybe you're thinking that these conditions are hard to get in your modern cellar with its furnace. But the specialists don't agree. Here's the plan they suggest.

Dry beans and onions, which keep best in cold, dry storage can go in the attic or the garage.

Pumpkins, squash and sweet potatoes stay in better condition in warm dry atmosphere, so you can keep them right in the furnace room.

But the root crops, like beets, carrots, parsnips, salsify, turnips and celery need a cool storage place. For such vegetables, you can use a special little storage room partitioned off in your basement where the temperature will remain low even when the furnace is burning. You can build such a storage room yourself using fiber board for the walls. Celery and cabbage keep best in moist, cold air. So store them in crates on the floor of your storage room and keep the floor covered with dirt or sand.

By the way, the home bureau exhibit which carried off the prize at the New York State Fair last month was one of these basement storage rooms which any family could build for itself. The fiber-board walls provided for insulation to keep the room at the proper cool temperature even though the basement was heated by the furnace. A window provided the necessary ventilation. And a coat of paint on the walls helped discourage rats and mice. Shelves and crates held enough potatoes and other root crops to supply a family during the eight months in New York State when gardens, orchards and fields are unproductive.

The specialists say that storage, like canning and drying, is only successful if you use good quality vegetables. The best storage conditions in the world won't make poor vegetables anything but poor vegetables. You need to put away those that are well-grown but neither old nor tough and those that have no cuts, bruises nor insect damage. Storing away imperfect vegetables is poor economy for they are likely to decay and that may cause you to lose the whole lot of otherwise good vegetables. Start with good products, handle them carefully, and store them under the right conditions. Then they'll keep a long time.

A thermometer in your storage room is a good investment. Then you can tell just exactly what temperature you have for your vegetables. The root and leaf crops like carrots, turnips, cabbage and celery need a temperature from 32 to 38 degrees F. Keep sweet potatoes, squashes, and pumpkins for a few weeks at 80 or 85 degrees to develop a tough protective skin which will hold in their moisture and resist molds and rots. Then, after this so-called curing period of a few weeks, you can keep them at about 50 to 56 degrees for the rest of the winter. White potatoes are best if you keep them at 45 to 50 degrees. Set pumpkins and squashes in rows on shelves so they won't come in contact with each other.

Many people prefer to keep cabbages and turnips in outdoor storage places because these stored vegetables sometimes give off odors that penetrate the entire house.

If you want further information on storing your garden crops for winter, write your state college or write direct to the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture at Washington, D. C.

Tomorrow: "Questions and Answers."

